



Healthy and Active Rainier Valley Coalition

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A partnership aimed at building and strengthening the Rainier Valley by improving the health of its residents through culturally relevant promotion of physical activity and nutrition.

Rainier Valley Health Policy Survey Findings

by Josh Fogt



Influencing local policy can have profound effects on the long-term health and well being of a community. In order to identify policies that can positively impact the health of the residents of Rainier Valley, I conducted interviews with interested members of the Healthy and Active Rainier Valley Coalition. Active and less active members of the coalition were interviewed. The interviews followed a loose guide intended to probe the members on two main areas: (1) their perceptions of the coalition itself and their involvement in it, and (2) their insight into the factors affecting the health of residents in Rainier Valley.

Every coalition member interviewed had positive feelings about the coalition and their involvement with it. Even inactive members interviewed hold that the coalition is doing important work. The widely held view is that the coalition is primarily a networking opportunity for service providers to learn about what each is pursuing programmatically and offering support where possible. There is also a perception that the coalition is essentially composed of an active core of members and a less active, more tangential ring of members who are essentially members in name only. The survey results raise questions about the lasting strength of the coalition and what the goals and expectations of the coalition should be going forward.

Findings on the factors influencing health in the Rainier Valley fall into five broad categories (which in some cases overlap):

- Crime and personal safety
- The effect of poverty and other social determinants of health
- Pedestrian safety
- Access to healthy food
- Access to areas for recreation and physical activity
- Cultural differences and the diversity of values represented in Rainier Valley



Among these, the effect of poverty and near-poverty as a profound social determinant of health is the overarching issue that ties all the issues brought up together. Individually, the most salient issue mentioned was personal safety. Worries about personal safety are perceived among coalition members to be a substantial barrier to more physical activity among residents, particularly among the elderly. Members are also concerned about pedestrian and cyclist safety along Rainier Avenue in particular, but also throughout greater Southeast Seattle. Many members feel like access to healthy food, both in terms of availability and cost, is a problem for many residents. The full report will discuss all of these findings in greater detail as well as provide recommendations for possible next steps. (Please see the following page for an article on the PBS "Unnatural Causes" series.)

Mindful Based Stress Reduction Class

This 8-week class on Wednesdays at the Rainier Community Center teaches mindfulness as a way of relating to our lives.

Here are some comments from recent participants:

"I used to smile a lot, at least in pictures, and I realized I'd like to be smiling more in my life. "

--Ruth Winter '08

There is a nine-week class starting that will be every Monday from April 14th to June 16th. It is \$45. For more information call Nelson at 461-6957 x119 or lopezn@psnhc.org.



Auky Van Beek, (in red), with participants Karen, Kim and Kristin

Senior Half Marathon



Training has started for seniors to participate in the Seafair half marathon

this June.

To sign up or for more info contact Mari Becker at:
sound.steps@seattle.gov

- **Healthy and Active Rainier Valley Coalition meetings** third Wednesday of the month at Rainier Community Center from 1-2:30 pm.
- **Community kitchen** 2nd Thursdays from 6:30-8:30pm at Rainier C.C.
- **Columbia Farmers Mkt** starts in May

"Unnatural Causes, is inequality making us sick?"



UNNATURAL CAUSES is a PBS series that challenges the conventional approach to prevention, which has mostly been limited to encouraging healthy behaviors.

Much of what can improve health lies outside an individual's control: better land use, transportation and business investment, ensuring that every neighborhood has access to supermarkets and healthy foods, creating safe streets and green space, investing in our schools; guaranteeing paid vacations, paid family leave, and living wage jobs with career ladders.

At our next HARVC meeting we will watch an episode from the series and explore what we as a coalition can do to further dialogue to address disparities in the Rainier Valley. Here is a link to local show times:
www.pbs.org/unnaturalcauses/local_listings.htm?station=KCTS&zipcode=98118

Eat Better, Feel Better

EBFB is a comprehensive nutrition, physical activity and health program that goes beyond classroom education, supporting food access through policies and system changes and partnering with school food service and other community agencies, to reach combined goals. The program aims to change behaviors around eating, health and activity levels.

EBFB is in five Seattle schools and two in the Highline district. Success is dependent on having a wellness coordinator/nutritionist at each school.

For more info contact Elizabeth at:
elizabetheth.kimball@kingcounty.gov.



Members



- Genesee Merchant's Assoc.
- AARTH Ministries